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A Word From Tim Downs - June



ATLANTA 2011 | Central Congregational UCC

Dear Friends,

The Annual Meeting of the Southeast Conference took place Saturday, June 11th. It was graciously hosted by Central Congregational UCC in Atlanta. Our organizing committee had said, "We want an annual meeting that is affordable and accessible, and that brings us into a larger sense of community." They asked that the meeting

celebrate some of the dynamic ministries of the conference and its congregations. The evaluations we received suggested that we succeeded in touching people's needs and strengthening an awareness of the extraordinary ministries that are unfolding in our midst.

The day began at 9:00 with Conversation Corners, which ranged in topics from introducing the Pathways program to reporting on our capital campaign to "Transform

Churches and Transform Lives." There were workshops, which addressed financial development and accountability within the life of the local church. Other workshops were a part of the invitation to consider being a Global Mission Partner Conference by introducing our upcoming mission trip to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Global Theological Education trip to Thailand in 2012. Tim Downs spoke about his recent trip to China to visit the work of our partner churches. We also had an introduction to the work of our partner in ministry, the Center for Progressive Renewal.

Following these conversations, we gathered for a moving worship service led by Kirkwood UCC. The worship began with a Service of Remembrance for all in our Conference who have died over the last year. Candles were lit, hymns sung and the many named who have been loved dearly. We ended on a word of hope and promise.

Ginny Nixon ably moderated our Annual Meeting. She received the moderator's cross from her predecessor, Vanessa Robbs, to open the meeting. All of the annual reports are available to you by going to this link: We encourage you to look at the accounts of the ministries that take place on your behalf, particularly at the budget for 2011. Perhaps most noteworthy, the Conference Annual Meeting passed a resolution introduced with an endorsement of the Board that we become a Global Mission Partner Conference.

During lunch, we recognized significant anniversary dates of ordination of pastors.

[CLICK HERE | SEC 2011 Meeting Materials](#)

UCC News

UCC Newsroom

Headlines from the United Church of Christ

[Clergy health care resolution approved by Synod delegates](#)

Delegates to General Synod 28 restored the vigor of the resolution "Affirming Healthcare Coverage for UCC Authorized Ministers and Their Families."

The amended resolution passed with 81 percent of the vote.



During January, the recognized significant anniversary dates of ordination of pastors, those preparing for ministry, and those who are new to ministry in the Southeast Conference. Our program featured a panel of Southeast Conference leaders who are doing noteworthy ministry focusing on renewal. Gwen Thomas spoke about the positive impact of being Open and Affirming on the life and ministry of an African-American church, particularly the church where she is a leader, Victory for the World UCC, Stone Mountain. Shannon Michael Pater, pastor of Central Congregational UCC, Atlanta, spoke about the challenges of introducing change in a church, which has a 129-year history, during which it has on occasion struggled for a sense of mission, and even at times for its own existence. He highlighted the particular challenges of overcoming the costs of a building and other dynamics in beginning to generate a spirit of mission and renewal established and rooted in love. Susie Smith, the pastor of Peace Congregational UCC in Clemson, SC, shared reflections about a ministry that has reached out to LGBTQ high school age young men and women across upstate South Carolina, and a ministry which is promoting the “locavore” movement, and care for the environment. Cindy Andrews-Looper of Holy Trinity Community, UCC, Nashville, spoke about the challenges of bringing greater diversity to a historically GLBT congregation, and the rich potential of ministry organized around small groups and mission. Each indicated that they would be available to share their experiences with others who might be interested. We were adjourned following a lively service of music and worship led by Praxis UCC, a new church start in the Atlanta area.

Upon reflecting on the churches and conference before us, I saw churches that are energetic and visionary, seeking to press toward justice and love. I saw a conference that is building vitality in our midst, and reminding us that we are connected in a web of mutuality, not only among ourselves but globally. I saw a people alive in the spirit.

Peace,

Tim Downs, Conference Minister

Timothy C. DownsTimothy C. Downs

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July 2011

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